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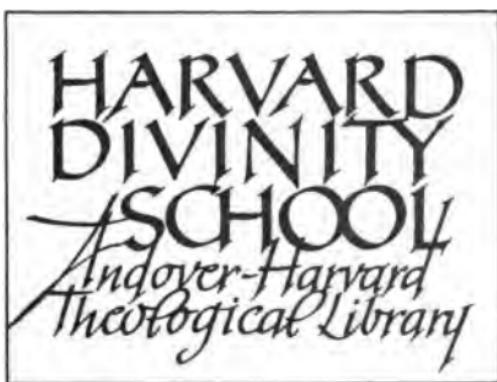
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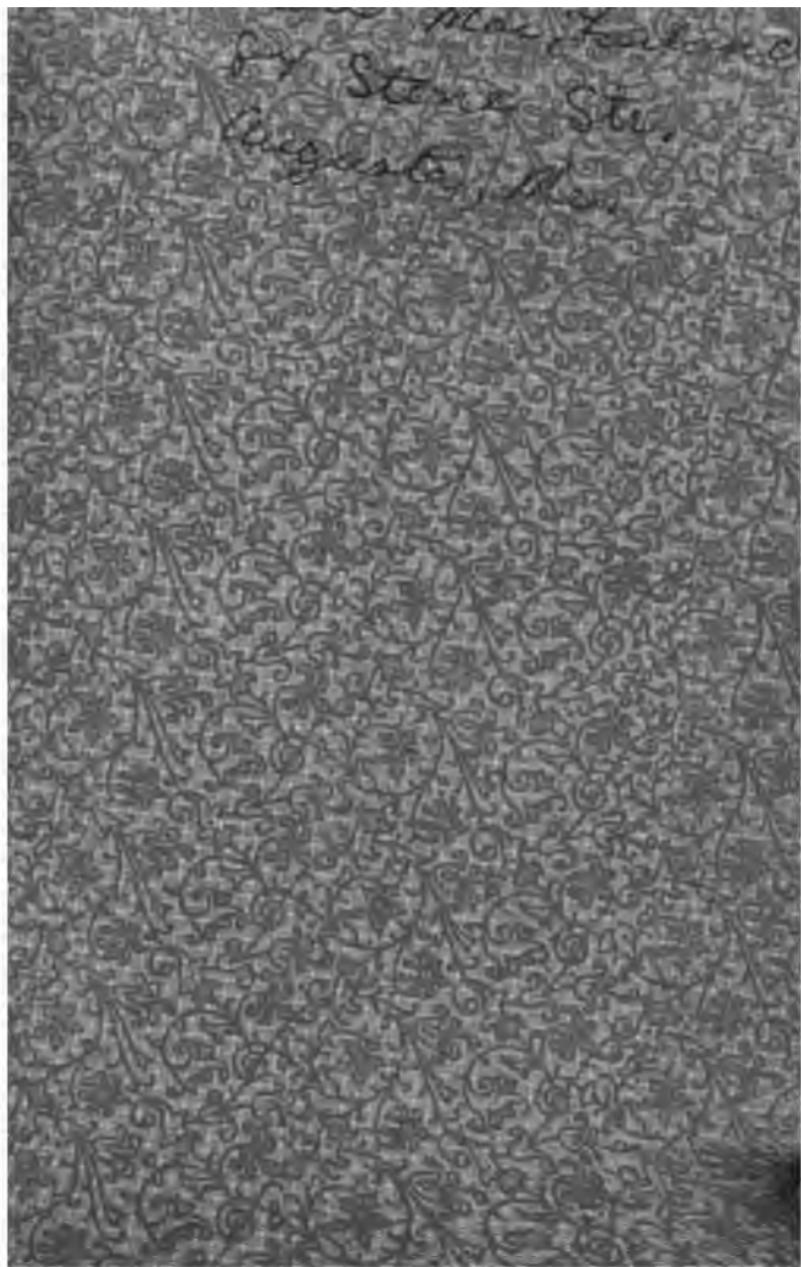
OUR LEGACY.

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OUR LEGACY.

OUR LEGACY.

"NEITHER PRAY I FOR THESE ALONE, BUT FOR THEM ALSO
WHICH SHALL BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH
THEIR WORD."



BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1889.

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University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

“Our Father which art in Heaven.”



*“How far from here to heaven ?
Not very far, my friend ;
A single hearty step
Will all thy journey end.
Hold, there ! where runnest thou ?
Know heaven is in thee :
Seek’st thou for God elsewhere,
His face thou’lt never see.”*

THE human heart so naturally reaches out to find and feel responsive life in the world, that loneliness stands for its greatest sorrow. The sense of solitude, of isolation from other life and love,—worse still, the doubt whether after all there be any other life and love to find,—means despair and death. And He who came that we might have life more abundantly has given us in these two words, “Our Father,” a foundation on which we may build secure. That God is in spirit and in truth a Father, not to me alone or to you alone, but to all men everywhere,—this is the key-note of the glad tidings that the Christ brought to the waiting world. Men had known that the Lord was a great and mighty King,—that nothing could withstand His power or defy His judgments; they knew that He was wise, they tremblingly declared that He was good, and they paid His awful name the homage of humble reverence. But only in fragmentary phrases of prophetic hope had they ever called Him Father. It was only as our Elder Brother taught us that we learned this truest name.

Not by chance was the name given to us just as it stands,—*Our* Father. It means that from the

very first our prayers must be larger than our own small selves, and until we learn to carry our brother's burden and our brother's need along with our own, we do not truly pray at all. Our prayer must be not alone for selfish advantage, nor for good which is careless of our brother's lack. Does not every day of our lives in one way or another teach us the impossibility of living without touching our neighbor? His honest happiness always makes us richer, our sorrow always makes him poorer; when one does wrong, the other suffers with him and through him and for him. And even when we look at the apparently unaccountable, hopeless, helpless sorrows that are visited on the innocent, we can sometimes see this one little gleam of light,—what if this trouble we are so quick to call unjust were sent to teach a careless race that it really *is* one people, one body, not as a mere figure of speech, but in actual, living fact? If this can indeed be the purpose of a seemingly purposeless Fate, if this can be the lesson our dull and indolent souls are destined to learn after centuries and ages of reiteration, then truly light may shine out for us from the darkest places; then, indeed, we shall learn to pray in the Christ's own spirit to his Father and ours.

How may we be sure that He truly is our Father? We can never prove it by mathematical laws or establish it by philosophic syllogisms. But first of all, since the pure in heart best understand holy things, we may take the Master's word for it; and after that, the more we try to live like loving, obedient, faithful children, the more sure and strong will grow our inward consciousness that we are indeed His children. We shall learn to understand Him in proportion as we grow to be like Him. May there be some who never dare to feel quite sure? God forbid; but if their doubt must stay, the truth lives too, and truth is stronger than any of our feelings about the truth. Sometime the true shall yet become for them the visible and blessed. Sometime to their faithfully listening ear shall come the old message :—

“ Each ‘*Lord, appear,*’ thy lips pronounce contains my ‘*Here am I,*’

A special messenger I send beneath thine every sigh;
Thy love is but the girdle of the love I bear to thee,—
And sleeping in thy ‘*Come, O Lord,*’ there lies ‘*Here, son,*’ from Me.”

“ Our Father which art in heaven.” Our prayer begins with a solemn *credo*, only we go deeper than

the old familiar phrases because in our very praise we own His presence. HE is, and He is in heaven. And what is this heaven? Not the distant seat of an awful, unapproachable throne, not a future *somewhere*, dim and doubtful, but a reality as truly here and now as the very air and sunshine that bless our physical existence. We may choose to dwell in noisome caves of the earth, where shadows and foul vapors congregate ; we may sit down in our own narrow dwellings with barred doors and shutters tightly drawn, and in their dim and oppressive dulness cry that light and air are no longer for the world,—that they are only an enthusiast's dream. But all the while the sun is shining outside, and the winds of heaven are blowing softly over our ungrateful heads. We have not violently to force ourselves into a consciousness of God : we could not do that even if we would, for the wind bloweth whither it listeth,—but we can sometimes take a quiet hour to sweep our hearts clean of common and selfish and ungenerous thoughts, and to open wide all their doors and windows in reverent welcome to His purifying breeze and His warm sunshine. They will come ; happy the temple wherein they are daily guests.

We cannot tell how they come. Like the

prophet of old upon the mountain-top, if the still, small voice speaks to us, it is so when we hear it that we hide our faces. But afterwards we are sure that a blessed Presence has been with us, for all the atmosphere has been somehow changed. There is a new and clearer light on the problems and perplexities that had looked so discouraging ; fresh suggestions of way and time and opportunity to do our duty have silently blossomed in unexpected places like Mayflowers under the dead leaves in spring, and our whole world is grown brighter and more hopeful and more earnest.

O Thou who patiently waitest nearer to us than our own selves, help us so to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts that Thou mayest freely enter in to bless !

“ Father, in Thy mysterious presence kneeling,
Fain would our souls feel all Thy kindling love ;
For we are weak, and need some deep revealing
Of trust and strength and calmness from above.

“ Lord, we have wandered forth through doubt and sorrow,
And Thou hast made each step an onward one ;
And we will ever trust each unknown morrow,—
Thou wilt sustain us till its work is done.

"In the heart's depths a peace serene and holy
Abides ; and when pain seems to have its will,
Or we despair, oh, may that peace rise slowly,
Stronger than agony, and we be still !

"Now, Father, now, in Thy dear presence kneeling,
Our spirits yearn to feel Thy kindling love :
Oh, make us strong, — we need Thy deep revealing
Of trust and strength and calmness from above."

“ Hallowed be Thy Name.”



*“ Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,—
I know that God is good ! ”*



HERE, in the sacred presence of the Lord, what is the first and nearest and deepest need our souls can feel and utter?

Our serenity may have been troubled in many ways,—our business venture has drifted on unprofitable coasts and we are harassed by thoughts of a wasted cargo, for we must eat and drink and be clothed; we are feeling the sharp ache of a friend's misunderstanding or unkindness; we are smarting under the consciousness of our own littleness and bad temper and every-day failure to be what we ought to be; our hearts are aching with helpless pain over some misfortune fallen upon our nearest and dearest: we need a thousand helps and pardons and encouragements, and our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things. But deeper and higher than these we need first of all the assurance of His own perfect goodness and wisdom. Once sure of that, we can be more reasonable and patient, not over-anxious about our barns and granaries, and our ships at sea. Once sure that He is the same yesterday and to-day and a million years hence, we can meet with braver

front a saddened outlook upon doubtful friendship and broken ties. Once sure that His goodness is the warm life-centre and heart of our universe, we shall forget to despair of our poor faults and foolishness ; we may even learn that hardest of all lessons in filial trust,— to believe that not only our own personal griefs but also the sorrows of our loved ones may be safely left in His faithful keeping.

True, if the seas were held in the hollow of a careless hand, if our own hearts made the only audible protest against falsehood and wrong, or if God were only a vaguely awful, characterless *Perhaps*, still, while men's souls were shaped as now, life would yet mean duty. Truth would still be better than lying, and pity better than cold selfishness. However hopeless and homesick the world might be, there would still be necessity for honor and self-denial and the courage of brave hearts. But our lot was never meant to be so hard as that. God hath not left Himself without a witness. We are not asking for the impossible when we pray that His Name may be one with holiness.

The assurance of it lies securest in our own faith ; that is, in our willing loyalty to our souls' best instincts of belief. This is a very different thing from the sentimentalism which exalts its own exaggerated

moods, and mistakes hysteria for inspiration. Our souls reach out into the universe with many sorts of hope and desire and fear and wonder and expectation, but it is certainly true that we can distinguish the best from the poorest of these instinctive, infantile gropings after God in the dark. It is certainly true that we may trust, nay, that we are bound in honor to trust and cultivate the faintest, feeblest beginning of a noble belief in Him rather than of any less noble belief. The command comes to us intuitively, like that which says, *Thou shalt do right and not wrong*. And when once our highest hope about God has had a chance to show that it was belief-in-bud, then gradually we find out the inner meaning of that spiritual economy which rules that he who hath shall receive yet more.

All this time we are not praying for ourselves alone, but for our brothers and sisters too. We would that every one might learn the open secret of God's perfect goodness ; that no careless or dull or sorrowful or resentful soul might long be blind to its truth. Can we do anything to bring the possibility nearer to them ? Can we help to hallow His Name ?

The knowledge of Him is our dearest possession, and it is the sort of wealth which grows by being

shared. Indeed, if we really believe in God's goodness with any sort of live conviction, we cannot help transmitting more or less of our conviction to those around us. Mere intellectual assent to the statement of His righteousness might leave us cool and inactive ; but the conscious knowledge of Him for ourselves as a living, loving, understanding Father, makes us apostles in our day, and sends us out instinctively to carry His message to others. And thus our prayer to Him grows into a sacrifice of willing self-consecration.

It shall avail. Think a minute. What is it that has helped us most to tend and cultivate the fair flower of a happy faith? What but that one perfect, consecrated life of the Man of Nazareth, the Good Shepherd of our souls,—a short life, spent in great part in simple and unnoted ways, yet all so absolutely high and true and loving, so completely faithful to feel and respond to every breath of the Holy Spirit, that shining out through his Divine life men first truly learned to see and know the Father? He who was the Way and the Truth and the Life, he whose meat and drink it was to do the will of the Father,—he opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, and showed us the riches of our inheritance.

And if we would be fellow-laborers with the Master to make God's Name holy in the sight of men, that life is still in our midst to help us no less truly than eighteen hundred years ago. Once let our cold and unresponsive souls kindle with some touch of his undying spirit, and we too may each in his way and time help to answer this first and greatest petition,—

Hallowed be Thy Name !



"Thy Kingdom Come."



"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."



IT is a dismal and spiritless state of things when a man can find nothing to work for. Our age is on the whole more liable to nervous prostration than to inanition and *ennui*, the object of our wearisome labors being more or less mistaken and valueless ; but here and there some blind or sluggish soul is still found sitting like the penitent procrastinators outside purgatory, drearily waiting for time to pass and for something to happen. As a man who has been too careless of the veracities will sometimes by being forced into a false position learn to hate lies and to long for truth, so imposed inaction may become, even to the laziest, a burden of wretchedness. Our hearts do demand something to hope for and something to work for ; to sustain our souls' life we must find some real and enduring object for our aspiration and our energy.

The religion which the Christ came to teach us stands pre-eminently distinguished from the old pagan systems by its spirit and attitude of wise and energetic hopefulness. It wastes little time in fanciful regrets for a dim, past Golden Age. Its ideals of character, of wisdom, of social peace and order, are

all of the to-be. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark."

In this age of lectures and experiments, of compact little manuals, of popularly scientific magazines and societies, it is not very difficult for a man to acquire a convenient store of technical facts and phrases. It is, however, quite too easy for him to make the mistake of hoarding these neat little coins like a very miser, imagining that they themselves are precious, when really their finest ultimate value lies just in their exchangeability for a larger thought and wider understanding of God and life. It is as if a man who owns a great telescope should spend all his time and care in polishing the lenses and the brass-work and decorating his observatory chamber, forgetting meanwhile to ever look out among the planets and the suns. Just here our scientific "smartness" needs the central purpose which an earnest religious spirit can supply. Jesus' teachings of a coming kingdom of truth and righteousness were given to us in a purely spiritual, not in a scientific form ; for science was not yet born when that serene light shone over the Palestine hills. But as the intellect of later centuries has translated for us the language of rock-stratum and flame and sun-

beam and lightning-flash and animal life, it ought to help us more and more to be sure that the Christ was right, and to understand how he was right. And the Christ-spirit in our own hearts ought to help us put together the dry bones of experiments and statistics and make them alive with meaning and inspiration.

• “ Teach me Thy love to know,
That this new light which now I see
May both the Work and Workman show ;
Then by a sunbeam I will climb to Thee.”

Is it just because we know the superficial words so well that they mean so little to us,— this story of a cloud, a fiery sun, a strange dark world with uncertain continents rising and falling in a shifting sea ; of fern forests (“ there were giants in those days ! ”), and animals like a naturalist’s dream ; of grinding ice-floes, and the long slow blossoming of rose-bush and apple-bough ? Is it because we care too much about making a clever little verbal defence against some disputant, that we forget all it implies when the orderly change of the universe seems to have shifted itself from natural to spiritual fields ; when, without any pause or break, the breath of the Lord which had moved upon the

face of the waters came to be felt more and more in the world of mind and soul, making them also wider and firmer and cleaner, and more fit for the heavenly possibilities that are sometime coming?

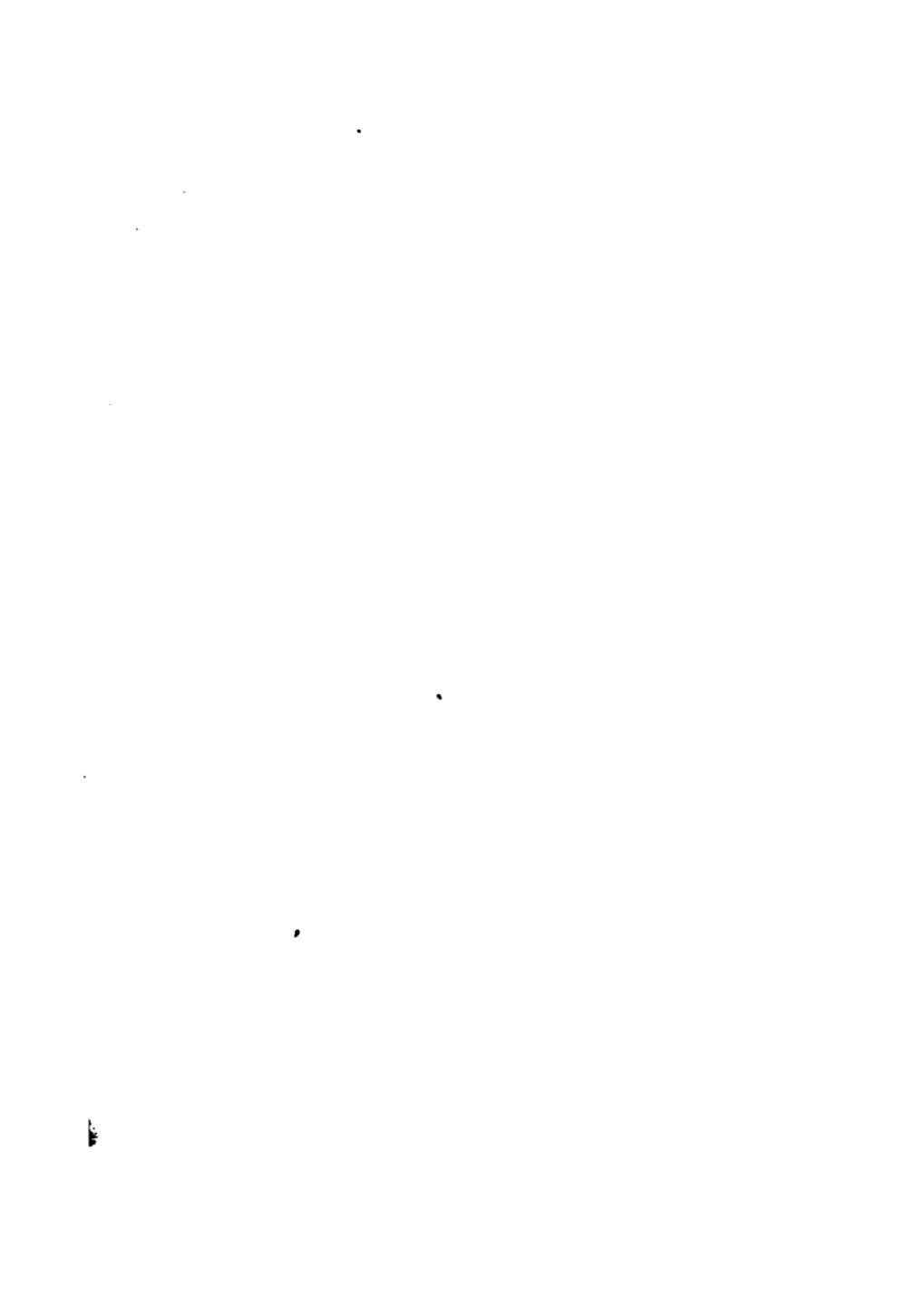
“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”

Here lies our “ something to hope for and something to work for,” — the coming of the Kingdom of God. Do we really long for its coming?

Certainly we hope for the day when wars shall cease from the earth, when rich and poor shall no longer despise and distrust each other, when trade shall mean the honest exchange of values, when man shall no longer be cruel to man, when peace and good-will and purity shall be the everyday atmosphere of home and community and nation. Certainly we pray that the Kingdom may come to make us safer and happier. But are we sure we want it to come into our own hearts and to sweep out every cobwebby corner of selfish desire and passion, of jealousy and indolence and cowardly delaying? For if we say, “ Make me holy, but not yet ; ” if we reserve one poor, shabby, little sin or self-indulgence, and say, “ Let all else be made new, but I must keep

just this one scrap of my old rags," then our prayer is only half honest, half a pretence. For the world is made up of all our several little fields and garden-plots, and the Kingdom of God cannot come to pass on earth so long as we set our selfish wills against it. We are given the power — it is an awful power! — to put off its coming for long, weary ages, while He waits.

Dear Father, we would not stay its coming. We would fain welcome Thy Kingdom with all our hearts, and hasten it in all our daily lives. We know not how far our faults are even now keeping back from the world the good things Thou hast in store for it. Help us to try to be good. Help us even more honestly and completely to desire to be good, and we will be more faithful to the hope Thou hast implanted in our breast!



“Thy Will be Done in Earth as it is
in Heaven.”



“I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what
his own hand is to a man.”

THE time has been in the lives of many of us,—
the time may come for us all, when an awful desolation shall rest upon the soul. When our empty arms reach out in vain into vacant and unresponsive space, when the old round of little daily duties seems but a dead mechanical array of forms and motions without any heart or any meaning in them, when familiar places are all homesick, and our little personal anniversaries bring every one its miserable heart-ache of remembrance; then brokenly as we must, but faithfully as we may, we can for a time offer the Father only this sacrifice of sorrowful submission.

But it is not alone when our hearts are aching and our souls are sick that we need to pray that God's will be done. The prayer belongs to our every day and hour; for besides its meaning of simple, filial submission, it is essentially a prayer for righteous energy. We know that our Father is Goodness itself; we are sure that He has in store for His children a better order of things than the world yet sees; we know it is His will that truth and righteousness shall crown a blessed earth, and

so we naturally pray that this Will may become visible reality. But as we learn little by little, and one word at a time, to "think God's thoughts after Him," there dawns upon us the wonderful and awful consciousness that He often means us to be the agents of His purpose ; that it is through the instrumentality of our human wills that His Will is destined fully to reign in the life of humanity.

To be His chosen workman, — nay, to "be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man" ! Our minds cannot really grasp the conception of it any more than they can compass the thoughts of eternity and endless space : it is our hearts alone that dare believe it.

But our gratitude sometimes forgets to be humble. "Every sail on the horizon is enchanted except that of the ship in which we sail." We could do some real and useful work, we say, had we but this man's time, and that man's talent, and the other man's wonderful succession of opportunities. Our own material is such hopelessly cross-grained stuff that it splits and shivers ; our skeins are snarled and tangled out of all semblance of encouragement. How is it possible that His will should be done under such disadvantages ?

That is just what we are to study to find out. There is very little either of religion or of common-sense in repeating in the face of social complications and perplexities that "whatever is, is right." Whatever is, is very often miserably wrong; but it does always hold some possibility of right. There is always a right way to approach and handle and move through the most hopeless of emergencies and disasters; and finding out and following that right way is the education which shall make us men and women of moral muscle and sinew. Do we doubt that it is always possible to do His Will? Then we are practically declaring that circumstance is a rival and a greater power than His own; or that His plans may possibly fail and His designs be thwarted by accidents that He has known about from the foundations of the world! Our souls are ashamed of such disloyalty as that. Nay, it must be true, since He is a living God, that some way or other His Will can always be done by the child who stands ready to do it.

" When across the inward thought
Comes the emptiness of life,
And it seems that earth is nought
But a vain and weary strife,—

“ All to do, and nothing done ;
 Useless days fast fleeting by ;
Wanderings many, progress none ;
 Faltering steps by fountains dry, —

“ Shall we, in that hapless mood,
 Fainting, fall beside the way ?
Help us, Giver of all good ;
 Teach Thy weary ones to pray.

“ Oh, forgive our faithless mind ;
 Raise us from our low estate ;
Breathe in us the will to find
 Higher life in small and great ! ”

“Give us this Day our Daily Bread.”



“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”

THE Father sets us no impossible tasks. In the path He points out there is no sorrow so great, no crisis so sharp, no entanglement of circumstances so hopelessly involved, but that something right and good can be wrought out of it. This conviction comes to us with the same certainty as our knowledge that we are God's children and joint-heirs with the Christ in his kingdom. And yet every day brings some puzzle, some emergency, some trial of our moral strength and fibre from which we shrink in the honest consciousness that we are unequal to its demands. What does it all mean?

A wise man tells us what it means : " Things may be unbearable just until we have them to bear : their possibility comes with them. For we are not the roots of our own being."

If our being were quite isolated and self-grounded, we could not long keep our footing when these high tides sweep and eddy and whirl their threatening waves about our trembling limbs. Ever since we were little children we have been told we must be good. Ever since we were children we have more or less constantly, more or less earnestly, tried to be good. But unless both temperament and circumstances

have been especially kind to us above our fellows, we realize, after a great deal of struggle and failure and self-contempt, that we cannot be very good, with just our own unaided powers. We are neither wise enough nor strong enough. We need help. And so our first petition of purely personal need is this : "Give us this day our daily bread."

We must not ask that duty be taken away. We must not ask that somebody else shall do the duty for us. We are to ask for the food which shall strengthen our own shoulders to bear manfully whatever burdens belong to them. And we are not to ask for one great refreshment which shall make us henceforth sufficient and satisfied and all-capable. We may go to Him every day anew, owning and glad to own our dependence upon Him, and thankful each day anew for the help He is waiting to give : —

" Not grateful when it pleaseth me,
As if Thy blessing had spare days,
But such a heart whose pulse may be
Thy praise."

This daily bread, the insight and strength and courage which God is always more ready to give than we can realize, is indeed a free gift, and yet in a certain sense we must earn it like the daily

bread which feeds our bodies. As our worldly toil earns us bread which strengthens us for yet more toil, so our receiving of new strength depends partly on the faithfulness with which we have spent our former strength. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine ;" and so, too, he that doeth the will of God ~~as~~ faithfully as he can, shall be given strength with which to do it better.

The physical condition of our bodies depends to a great extent on the healthful or unhealthful nature of the food provided for them ; and so it is likewise with our souls. A right regimen of physical nutrition means physical health, a right supply of spiritual food means spiritual health,—that is, Salvation. Bodily health means freedom from unsoundness and disease,—from the danger-signals of disordered stomach, aching head, quivering nerves. Spiritual health means freedom from moral disease and its kindred symptoms,—aching vanity, stinging remorse, weary selfishness. Bodily health does not secure us immunity from all pain, for a well man may be burned by fire or crippled in a railway accident ; and so a "saved" soul may suffer agonies from the world's wickedness and a brother's misery, but it will all be a clean and unselfish sorrow, with no shameful smart of willing sin.

When the shadow of calamity was drawing nearer to the Master in Galilee, when problems multiplied and demands upon his spiritual strength grew greater and greater, he used to go apart by himself to pray. Does that show us how we too may learn more of his insight and his heroism? His voice assures us with no uncertain sound : “ In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer : I have overcome the world.” “ Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Shall we not trust him? Shall we not follow where he leads, to the waiting presence of his Father and ours?

“ Father, to us Thy children, humbly kneeling,
Conscious of weakness, ignorance, sin, and shame,
Give such a force of holy thought and feeling,
That we may live to glorify Thy name, —

“ That we may conquer base desire and passion,
That we may rise from selfish thought and will,
O'ercome the world's allurement, threat, and fashion,
Walk humbly, gently, leaning on Thee still.

“ Let all Thy goodness by our minds be seen ;
Let all Thy mercy on our souls be sealed :
Lord, if Thou wilt, Thy power can make us clean ;
Oh, speak the word, — Thy servants shall be healed ! ”

"And forgive us our Trespasses as we forgive them that Trespass against us."



*"Like warp and woof all destinies
Are woven fast,
Linked in sympathy like the keys
Of an organ vast.
Pluck one thread, and the web ye mar ;
Break but one
Of a thousand keys, and the paining jar
Through all will run.
Back to thyself is measured well
All thou hast given :
Thy neighbor's wrong is thy present hell,—
His bliss, thy heaven."*

THERE is a narrow and selfish way of repeating our petition for forgiveness. It is that of the grudging spirit which says, "I have fallen short of my task, and I fear to be punished for it; if forgiving my neighbor can piece out my own shortcomings, I will remit his debt, though it is a pity I must." Poor, niggardly spirit, that will give only on compulsion, or on the definite promise of an equivalent in return!

What, then, did the Master mean?

There are two ways in which we have need to forgive our neighbor: first, for the little, petty jars and disagreements, the careless speech that grates on our sensitive pride, the taste that seems to us so poor and offensive, the judgment that seems to our own notion so crude and mistaken,—for the thousand little worries that come of uncongenial temperaments and surroundings. For these we must cultivate a simple and wise forbearance. Is our brother blunt and rude? But we often annoy him by a seemingly cool indifference; perhaps he too is partly right. Is he arbitrary and exacting about trifles? From his point of view he honestly

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▀

"I have no doubt he paid his
debt, and can present his
name, I will remit his debt." "I
would poor, niggardly
on compulsion, or
equivalent in value.

What does a *z* mean?

There are
several
ways to
do this.

thinks we are selfish and unkind in disobeying his wish ; is that possibly half true ? Does he annoy us daily by his indolent failure to lend a hand in common tasks ? He fancies that our self-sufficiency enjoys keeping everything in our own control ; can we too be perhaps a little in fault ? The best of men do sometimes try their friends' forbearance. It is not for us to remember our brothers' petty failings when we come into the Father's house. In this still hour, while the windows of our hearts are open for better thoughts to sweep through, we grow ashamed of the littleness and self-regard of yesterday's impatience, yesterday's exasperation, and a gentle voice speaks to us out of centuries past its message of sweet reasonableness and dignity : —

“ It is no great matter to associate with the good and gentle, for this is naturally pleasing to all, and every one willingly enjoyeth peace, and loveth those best that agree with him. But to be able to live peaceably with hard and perverse persons, or with the disorderly, or with such as go contrary to us, is a great grace and a most commendable and manly thing. . . . He that knoweth best how to suffer will best keep himself in peace. That man is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of heaven.”

But what of the wounds deeper than surface-smart,—the real wrongs and sorrows that we do sometimes suffer at the hands of our fellow-men?

One summer day we climbed to the top of that hazy blue mountain in the north. It was a long and laborious day. We trod the crisp, ripe grass of the fields along its base, we lingered in the shadows of tall pines, we came out into the open, sunny pastures above, climbed the steep and broken ledges about the summit, and then our grateful eyes were given as it were all earth's kingdoms for their own. We saw the whole course of the little river whose banks we knew by heart; the foot-hills were only low waves of green; farm-houses and winding roads were but tiny lines and dots in the great expanse of living earth. Our mind's eye was somehow opened. We had been often told that the world was wide, but now we saw for ourselves that it was so; and while the mountain wind blew sweet and strong, it seemed to carry us higher and farther out from the commonplace detail of things until we dreamed we saw the whole round earth poised and perfect in ethereal space. And behold, it was very good!

So, sometimes, perhaps only once in a lifetime,—once is enough if we but faithfully hold the

memory of it,— we may stand on heights whence the world of struggling, loving, tempted, toiling men is seen in such a vision; not as a mere series of implied duties and emergencies of contact, not just as a multitude of human items that when added up make a mathematical total, but in very truth a living, breathing whole,— an organic One. And when that vision has once dawned upon us, we can no longer resentfully remember that we have been injured, and that it is our neighbor who has done us wrong. Not that we close our eyes when we see him doing evil, or refuse to own that it is evil; nothing is to be gained by moral dishonesty, however kindly meant. We must needs hate evil wherever we see it; but the evil-doer is by virtue of his very humanity a part of ourselves, and we can only be sorry for him with our whole hearts, and long to help him into better ways. Do not we too do wrong? Alas! yes. And have we not learned that sin means inevitable sorrow and loss and delay in the fulfilment of our life's purpose? If his punishment has come quickly and evidently, there can be no need for us to cast scornful stones at him; if, on the other hand, his eyes are not yet quite so clear as ours, if he has not yet learned to hear the voice of a commanding

conscience, if easy unscrupulousness and self-satisfaction have never yet given any place to humiliation and repentance, then, indeed, while hating the evil he has wrought, we must feel for himself only honest grief. For we know that sometime, somehow, blind eyes must open, deaf ears must hear the still small voice, and, be it through never so bitter and painful a stress of remorse delayed, he must yet come to see things as they really are, and through darkness and trouble learn to begin all over again in purer wise. We in our time have felt some breath of God's purifying fires. Can we be careless of the ordeals waiting for him?

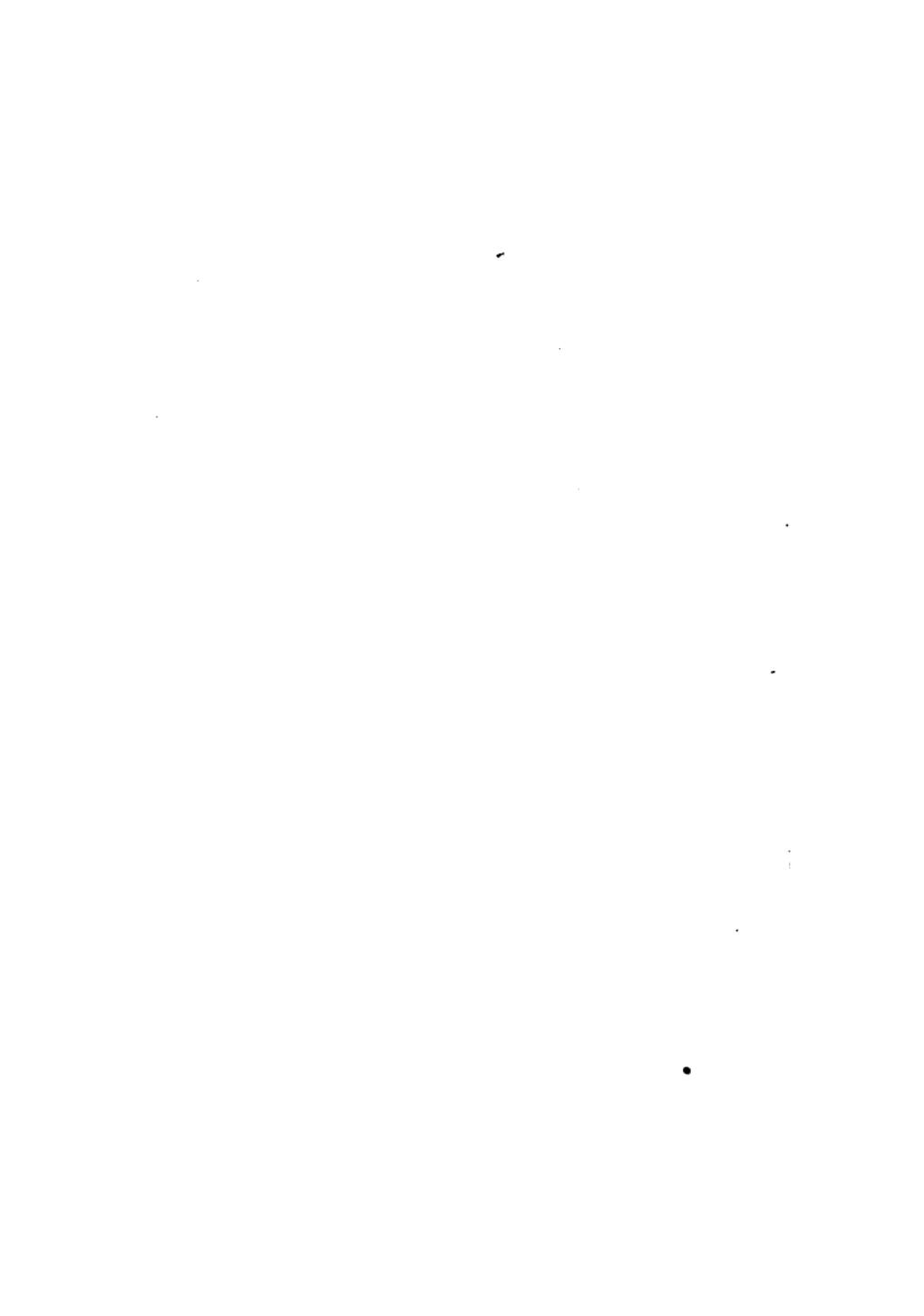
When, therefore, as repentant children, we tell our Father that we long to do better, it must be with no reservations of resentment or Pharisaic scorn of our brother's shortcomings. If by his faults we have been pained and hindered and tempted away from the good we meant, just so our own sins have always been making it easier for him to sin, harder for him to be good and true ; for, besides the direct contagion of example and influence, they have made the whole moral atmosphere just so much less fine and pure and life-sustaining. Hand in hand we must return to our Father's house.

Lord, we come back once more, weary and sorry,
and ashamed of our sins. We come back to ask
Thee to forgive our brother too. And since all our
tenderness and love are but born of Thine own, we
know Thou wilt be pitiful and faithful and ready to
help us both.

“And Lead us not into Temptation.”



*“I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do
Or secret thing to know:
I would be treated like a child,
And guided where I go.”*



THE finest and highest sentiments uttered by unworthy lips may be debased into something small and common. If we repeat in a weak, cowardly fashion this petition for safety from temptation, we shall make it a weak and miserable prayer. But we are sure such an element had no original part in it. That heroic spirit whose crowning sacrifice has been and will ever be the inspiration of humanity, knew nothing like the coward's terror.

It is but natural that we should in a certain sense always shrink from the ordeal of pain and trouble. Only the morbid spirit of an outgrown asceticism could desire pain for its own sake, or be glad to suffer just for the very sake of suffering. There is ideally no more virtue in being uncomfortable than in being happy. And just as our eyelids drop like a flash to protect the eye from an approaching blow, or a dazzling light, or a whirl of dust-motes, so with the healthy heart; it naturally opens to sunshine rather than to storm, and to peace rather than to strife and misery. This is the spiritual side of the inborn instinct of self-preservation. But the man who coddles his eyes when he ought to keep them

open to steer a sinking ship into port is a poor creature ; and the man who prefers being comfortable to being good and useful in his generation is a poor creature too. It is the possibility of trials too great for our strength which rightly reminds us to pray that we be kept from temptation. The prayer is not that of fear, but of a wise humility.

“ Consider well if virtue be in me
Sufficient, ere to this high enterprise
Thou trust me ! ”

We all feel now and then the force of the old philanthropist’s sincerity when he said that but for the grace of God it might have been himself who climbed the gallows stair. It is easy at first to pass superficial judgment on our fellows, but he who has ever felt serious temptation creeping across his own path does learn after a while to be more generous to other men, — more humble in himself. And our neighbor’s success especially shames our probable failure. We think our own ordeals are trying enough ; dare we ask to exchange them for his ? In the depths of our soul we own that we could never have borne his sorrow as bravely as he has borne it. Where his sturdy courage grew stronger under repeated blows, our love of human praise

would have dragged us down into shameful defeat. Where his manly instinct of perfect truth and honor somehow wrought righteousness and self-respect out of a wretched snarl of dangers and disadvantages, our coarser moral fibre would have brought us to humiliating disaster. The lesson would have been too hard for us, dull scholars that we are. Let us honor him whose powers proved not unequal to the task !

And is there, then, real danger that we shall make moral shipwreck by meeting perils too great to be coped with? There is ; and yet there need not be. So long as the Father leads us we are safe. The path may lie not always by green pastures and beside still waters ; it may often take us through desert places where we faint for water, and over awful heights where cliff and chasm bid us walk with steadiest tread : it is all one so long as the Father leads us. We are safe. But sometimes we insist on choosing our own path, and He lets us do it if we will. We say, "Suppose it is not exactly right ; one cannot always be so scrupulous ; it cannot make much difference, and the way looks so inviting ; we might as well have some pleasure as we go along ; after us the deluge !" Then it is that we lose our way. Then it is that snares and pitfalls

multiply till we may well cry out in our extremity for guard and protection.

What we mean, then, is to pray that we be not left to our own poor guidance ; that we may not wilfully turn away from the Father's hand, but trust Him better, sure that if He leads us it will not be into temptation ; that while He leads us temptation can call but for faithfulness and courage,—it can never mean despair.

Here, once more, our prayer, if it means anything at all, means another recognition of duty. Must we not help the Lord to keep us out of temptation by turning resolutely away from it as soon as danger is suspected? We vain, self-confident creatures never seem to learn much from another man's experience ; perhaps it is necessary we should learn the nature of temptation's approach, each for himself, even at fearful risks. But a soul that honestly desires and strives to be good ought not to need many warnings before it grows wise enough to know that certain fruits are always poisonous. It ought not to take us long to learn the danger of coqueting with evil thoughts, of idly indulging a half-way fancy for what leads to wrong, of literally or metaphorically following in the steps of the poor fellow who "swears off," but imagines it will do no

harm if he omits to count just one single small glass of his potent enemy.

And "Lead *us* not into temptation." Help our brother not to be overcome by hard circumstance and evil inclination. Help him also to keep close hold of Thy hand and fear no spiritual assailants! Do we mean that too?

If we do truly mean it, we shall learn a new motive for tenderness toward him. Has he a temper that flashes fire on small provocation? Our anxiety to save him from unnecessary grounds of provocation will grow not simply out of our luxurious preference for calm, but out of a genuine desire to help him keep his hold on our common life-line. Is he too easily persuaded or encouraged into carelessness and indulgence? We can never again take advantage of these weak points for our own convenience. We must needs help as a brother may help, to strengthen the feeble knees. And our power in this wise is not small. There are times and places where a brother's voice and a brother's hand, even his silent, loving presence, may in God's providence do for man what God Himself doeth not.

Keep us, O our Father, so near to Thee that life shall bring us only serious earnestness, but no terror, no despair. Lead Thou in the way we

should tread ; for we know if Thou dost truly lead,
it will not be into temptation. And help us, oh,
help us more and more to be good to each other
and to help each other !

“ Oh, where Thy voice doth come,
Let all doubts be dumb,
Let all words be mild,
All strifes be reconciled,
All pains beguiled ;
Light bring no blindness,
Love no unkindness,
Knowledge no ruin,
Fear no undoing,—
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh, save ! ”

“But Deliver us from Evil.”



“I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but That thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

“From the ingrained fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars Thy creature,
From grief that is but passion,
From mirth that is but feigning,
From tears that bring no healing,
From wild and weak complaining,
Thine own strength revealing,
Save, oh, save !”

WE need no long search for the evil of the world,—that evil from which we pray God to deliver us. It is at home in the very springs of our daily action. It is its bitter flavor which makes us sick and unsatisfied with our faulty and imperfect lives ; for our great hindrance

“lies not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.”

One of the truest and most terrible convictions that life ever opens to us is that of the tyranny of our own past. We see this truth in its most blunt and brutal guise when a man who has committed one single actual crime is forced by this very deed to follow it up with an increasing multitude of wrongs and falsehoods as a matter of self-defence against justice, until he is hopelessly entangled in

toils of his own wretched weaving. But it is not for the defaulter or the murderer alone that the rule holds true. It belongs as certainly to the commonplace day of the commonplace man and woman. It holds true of the white lie we told yesterday, and the task we shirked and slighted last week, and the cold indifference which turned us away from our neighbor's need this morning, and the sharp retort that still echoes through the space between us and our friend. For just as physical motions and attitudes grow into second-nature and become oftentimes quite involuntary and mechanical, so a once-willing wrong has a fearful power of perpetuating itself, and compelling us to its obedient repetition. A man is lazy, self-indulgent, given to shirking serious duties and postponing troublesome ones : it is not long before his self-enfeebled will is almost unequal to setting itself resolutely to work in any manly, energetic fashion. A woman tells little untruths in a careless or a cowardly way, fancying that a smooth story or an hour's peace quite excuses her small slips of the tongue ; but it does not need long years of such careless handling to make truth quite lose its shape and color in her hands. She grows, in fact, gradually color-blind, and becomes incapable of any right distinctions be-

tween truth and lies, and is forced at last by her own relentless self to fall back on expediency as a wretched substitute test.

We acknowledge the fact of all this tyranny of our own worst selves when we say in excusing some sudden delinquency, "I did the best I could. There was no time to think. I could not have done anything else under the circumstances." That may be all too true ; but what would a better self have done in the same emergency? What if our real fault was that we had not somehow made ourselves more ready for this unexpected trial by a long practice of faithfulness and right-choosing and walking straight forward in unselfish ways ?

Dear Lord, oh, save us and deliver us from the power of our own worst self, when it comes armed with our past consent to its victory !

For, after all, the wrong in our own hearts is the only real evil we need greatly fear. We learn the lesson sooner or later. Perhaps it is only after we have valiantly ridden up and down the land in glittering armor to slay a giant or a dragon, that we come home to find the enemy in possession of our own four walls. His name is Selfishness ; but he has a hundred different faces. One we know for jealousy, one for indolence, one for untruth, one

for quick resentment and anger. Each heart know-
eth best its own shadows.

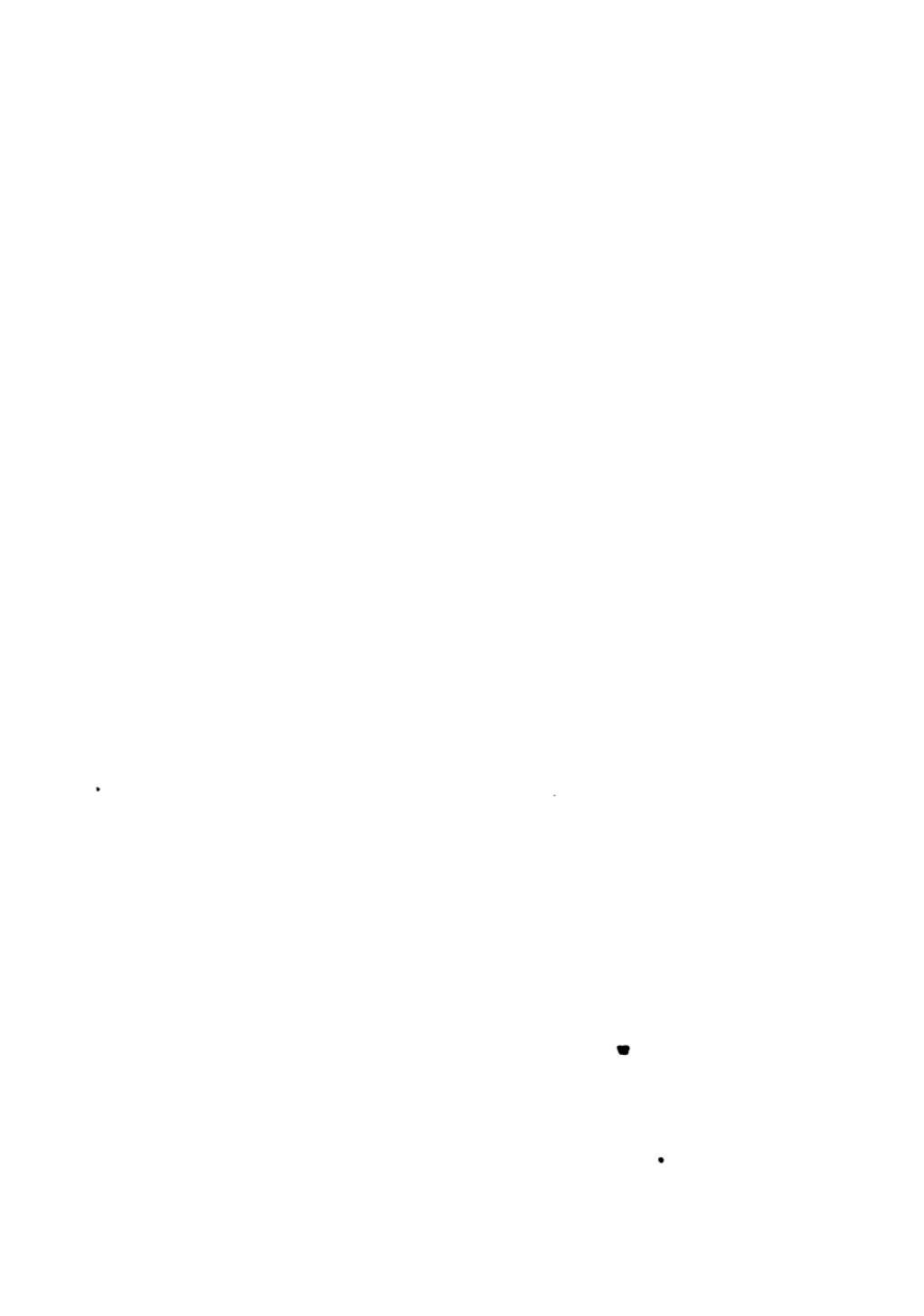
Here, now, in the listening silence of God's pres-
ence, let us own in honest humility that it is our
own shadow which does most to darken a fair world.
As long as we are blind or indifferent to the ugly
black streaks in our nature, as long as we deny that
they are ugly, or fancy it is too much trouble to
attack their disfiguring shapes, so long they bind us
in chains of hopeless captivity. But when once
our worst self is seen and known for our worst foe,
the evil that moment ceases to be truly one with us ;
it becomes something external to our real person-
ality, and so a thing which it is possible to fight.
To fight? Nay, even to conquer, if He but help us.

O Thou Father of us all, who hast in Thy wis-
dom framed us as we are, help us, we beseech Thee,
more and more to hate the sin that binds us to its
dismal service. Help us to be brave enough to
face and own the evil in our hearts. Help us to
be faithful enough to fight it manfully every day.
Help us by Thine own strength to be strong
enough to overcome it in Thy good season, and
sometime to stand before Thee, not slaves but free-
men, who shall be glad and not ashamed in the
light of Thy pure eyes !

**“For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power
and the Glory.”**



*“For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win:
To doubt would be disloyalty;
To falter would be sin.”*



LORD, we believe. Help Thou our unbelief!

Astronomers know that when the orbit of a heavenly body cannot be all accounted for by those factors of attraction and energy which are known and evident, there must be at work yet other forces acting from some equally real, existent, though unknown source. So also of humanity's beckoning ideals, its hopes, its despairs, and its inborn instinct of prayer. Not in vain did the beauty of holiness blossom in human guise in Bethlehem's mountain village. Not with the meaningless music of cold, dead words does the Christ speak to his younger brethren. He who put it into the heart of Jesus Christ to give us such hopes and desires and confidence, cannot conceivably fail to do all He has made us ask for. We know that our prayer is for only those things which are good and right. If when we use its phrases they are sometimes weakened and soiled by our clinging self-consciousness and petty discontent, still we are sure the prayer itself is all fine and right. Our faltering pronunciation cannot actually touch its pure spirit of heavenly sonship. It is a thousand times more

blessedly real than all our small discouragements and despairs.

And shall God truly answer, and give us all we ask?

There is no room to doubt it. He is our Father; the Goodness for which our souls are faint; the Mighty One whose thoughts we are just beginning to spell out after Him in nature and in life. Shall the Kingdom of peace and righteousness sometime come to earth? It is His Kingdom. We are assured. May any power be completely sure and strong to control and guide the forces of the universe, to break our selfish chains, and to help poor humanity climb His mountains into purer air and broader view? It is His Power that rules. We are content. Shall we, dull, forgetful, indolent, passionate souls, ever in ages to come learn to be quite pure and fine and good, and wear some small touch of that radiant halo which shines about our distant, beckoning ideals? It is His Glory that we see reflected on the opening, upward path, and He has called us His children. That is our answer.

We know not how to be grateful as we ought, for once more His gifts are too wonderful for our childish understanding. But our hearts, keeping time with the great common pulse of humanity, feel in

this holy moment the awful reality of His present love, and in the inspiration of this sacred time we will go forth to work and to wait. Our gratitude shall be to believe Him with more adoring loyalty.

“ O Love Divine, whose constant beam
Shines on the eyes that will not see,
And waits to bless us while we dream
Thou leavest us because we turn from Thee, —

“ All souls that struggle and aspire,
All hearts of prayer by Thee are lit,
And, dim or clear, Thy tongues of fire
On dusky tribes and twilight centuries sit.

“ Shine, Light of God! Make broad Thy scope
To all who sin and suffer; more
And better than we dare to hope,
With Heaven’s compassion, make our longings poor! ”

Amen.



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